

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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In Rely Refer To:
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Instruction Memorandum No. 98-141
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To: AFO's
From: Director
Subject: Humane Destruction of Wild Horses and Burros

This policy identifies requirements for decisions involving humane destruction of wild horses and burros.

The authority for humane destruction of wild horses or burros is provided by the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, Section 3(b)(2)(A) 43 CFR 4730.1 and BLM Manual 4730 - Destruction of Wild Horses and Burros and Disposal of their Remains.

A Bureau of Land Management authorized officer may authorize the humane destruction of a wild horse or burro with any of the following conditions:

- (1) displays a hopeless prognosis for life;
- (2) suffers from a chronic or incurable disease or serious congenital defect;
- (3) requires continuous treatment for the relief of pain and suffering;
- (4) is incapable of maintaining a body score greater than one, in a normal rangeland environment.

There are two situations where the authority for humane destruction may be applied:

- (1) If an animal has suffered a traumatic injury or other condition that causes acute pain or suffering and immediate humane destruction would be an act of mercy, the authorized officer has the authority and the obligation to promptly destroy the animal in a humane manner, without the advice of a veterinarian. After humanely destroying an animal, the authorized officer must notify the district or field office manager and document the action.

- (2) If an animal suffers from any of the conditions listed above, but is not in acute pain, the authorized officer has the authority to destroy the animal in a humane manner after consulting with a veterinarian and notifying the district or field office manager of the decision to euthanize the animal. The authorized officer will document the action with a written statement covering the advice of the veterinarian and the action taken and will promptly notify the state office and the wild horse and burro National Program Office.

If, for humane reasons, the need for destruction of animals during a gather operation is anticipated, the humane destruction should be identified in the pre-gather planning process. When pre-gather planning identifies a likelihood that animals may need to be humanely destroyed, plans should be made for a veterinarian to visit the gather site during the gather to advise the authorized officer on humane destruction decisions.

In all cases, the final decisions regarding humane destruction of a wild horse or burro for humane reasons rests solely with the authorized officer (43 CFR 4730). Humane destruction will be carried out following the procedures described in the 4730 manual. Horses or burros should never be destroyed solely for reasons of population control.

Questions regarding this memorandum should be directed to Tom Pogacnik, Chief, Wild Horse and Burro National Program Office at (702) 785-6583.

Signed by:
Pat Shea
Director

Authenticated by:
Robert M. Williams
Directives, Records
& Internet Group, WO540